

# Kurt G. Wintermeyer Boardwalk:

## Since 1993, An Education & Conservation Success Story

From the very beginning, when the overstory was cleared from the pitcher plant bog in early 1993, an important objective of Weeks Bay Reserve has been the preservation of this rare natural area for the education and enrichment of future generations. Many of the spectacular plants that are found in the bog can grow only in this very specialized habitat, and some are quite rare. Today, after more than a dozen years of careful development and management, the pitcher plant bog has become one of the best-known and most popular outdoor recreational and educational sites in Baldwin County.

As part of our twentieth anniversary celebration at the reserve, we can look back with satisfaction, to see how far we have come in our efforts to preserve, and at the same time, make the bog accessible to the public. These photographs should also remind us that, as a delicate and complex natural community, the bog will continue to demand our best efforts and all of our expertise to meet the challenges of the future.



Courtesy: National Fish & Wildlife Service



*Small, delicate yellow fringeless orchids (Platanthera integræ) are found only in healthy pitcher plant bogs, like the one at Weeks Bay Reserve. Only about a dozen populations of these rare orchids are known in Alabama.*



Though there are hundreds of White-topped pitcher plants (*Sarracenia leucophylla*) in our bog, over-collection, fire suppression and habitat loss have made these beautiful plants increasingly rare. They are considered endangered in Alabama.



The rosebud orchid (*Cleistes divaricata*) is quite rare, and only appears in pitcher plant bogs and pine flatwoods soon after they are burned!



The uncommon pine lily (*Lilium catesbaei*) blooms in the bog in August and September. Some years these pretty red flowers bloom by the dozen in the bog, and other years, only a few can be seen. We still have a great deal to learn about pitcher plant bogs!



The beautiful lavender-colored pale grasspink orchid (*Calopogon pallidus*) has been seen only a couple of times in our bog.



Boardwalk visitors view White-topped pitcher plants in the bog at Weeks Bay Reserve.



Pitcher plant bogs are fire-dependent habitats that require periodic burning to remain healthy. The bog has been very carefully burned by reserve staff and volunteers nearly every year since the overstory was cleared in 1993. Despite appearances, the gazebo is not burning! In fact, Otilie Halstead, one of our treasured volunteers and a major benefactor of the boardwalk, can just be made out on the right side of the gazebo.

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